

PROJECT NAME: Dixie National Forest (Castle Valley Ranch)

RECIPIENT: The Trust for Public Land

LOCATION: Iron County, Utah

PURPOSE: Available for acquisition by the Dixie National Forest in FY 2011 is the 680-acre Castle Valley Ranch located in Iron County. The ranch is surrounded by federally owned land and has been a high acquisition priority for the Dixie National Forest. The majority of the property is dominated by a combination of grassland and sage meadows. Surrounding the meadows are forests consisting primarily of aspen, Douglas fir, and spruce. A stream on the property feeds into Panguitch Lake. The stream runs year round, and all summer long, fish are visible to passers-by on the banks. In the spring, winter run-off creates ponds in the meadows, providing habitat for ducks and water for deer and elk. The upper meadow on the ranch contains spring water and is home to an elk herd during the summer.

The property is a working cattle ranch that has been owned by a single family since it was homesteaded in 1800s. The ranch has changed little over the years, and the natural beauty of the ranch makes it extremely attractive for second home development. The risk of development is especially high due to the property's ready access via Highway 143 and proximity to popular tourist attractions such as Cedar Breaks National Monument, Brian Head Ski Resort, and Panguitch Lake. Cedar City, which is thirty-seven miles away, has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, and the city's growing population places additional pressure on local natural areas popular for hiking, climbing, and camping. As a result, the surrounding mountains are in great demand for recreational properties. Plans have already been made for thirty home sites at Castle Valley Ranch, but the family is now offering the land for conservation and public acquisition. Development would be detrimental to adjacent Forest Service lands, promising further habitat fragmentation, invasion of nonnative species, deterioration of water quality, and increasing difficulties in managing wildfire.

The total estimated cost of the acquisition is \$3.25 million, but the \$1.414 million included in the President's Forest Service land acquisition budget will enable the project to proceed with the first phase of approximately 285 acres. The appropriation would be used to pay the fair market value of the acreage to be acquired, as determined by a federally reviewed and approved appraisal.

AMOUNT: \$1,414,000